

Remarks

The Office Action dated August 15, 2003 has been carefully reviewed and the foregoing amendment has been made in consequence thereof.

Claims 1-20 are pending in this application. Claims 7-11 stand rejected. Claim 4 is objected to. Claims 1-3, 5, 6, and 12-20 are allowed.

The objection to Claim 4 because of informalities is respectfully traversed.

Claim 4 has been amended as suggested by the Examiner to recite "said bolt bore seat".

For the reasons set forth above, Applicants respectfully request that the objection to Claim 4 be withdrawn.

The rejection of Claims 7-11 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Chaix et al. is respectfully traversed.

Chaix et al. describe a pipe joining apparatus that includes retractable bearing members. The apparatus includes flanges 16 and 18 which are similar to each other. Flange 16 includes a ring 20 and bearing members 22 positioned within the ring. The bearing members are pivotally connected to the ring by a bearing member tongue 30 inserted between two caps 32,24 mounted on a lateral face of the ring with a spindle 36 placed in aligned holes in the tongue and the caps. The bearing members include bolt holes 38 for receiving tightening rods. The inner face of the bearing members include a frustum-shaped shoulder 28 which can bear against the frustum-shaped shoulder 12 of the pipe flange (see Figure 3 and Col. 2, line 49 to Col. 3, line 15). Chaix et al. do not describe nor suggest that the bolt holes 38 extend through the body of ring 20.

Claim 7 of the present application recites "a coupling spring ring for coupling a first pipe section flange to second pipe section flange in a nuclear reactor . . . said spring ring comprising:

a body having a first surface and an opposing second surface, said body comprising a main bore and a plurality of bolt bores extending therethrough from said first surface through said opposing second surface . . . a plurality of pivot bearings extending from said first surface, each said pivot bearing configured to engage a pipe section flange notch; and a plurality of bolt bore seats located in said second surface and coaxially aligned with said bolt bores".

Chaix et al. do not describe nor suggest a coupling spring ring as recited in Claim 7. Particularly, Chaix et al. do not describe nor suggest a body that includes a main bore and a plurality of bolt bores extending therethrough and a plurality of pivot bearings extending from the first surface of the body. Rather, Chaix et al. describe an apparatus that includes a ring or body and a plurality of bearing members pivotally attached to the ring. The ring does not include a plurality of bolt bores extending therethrough from the first surface to an opposing second surface of the ring, nor a plurality of pivot bearings extending from a surface of the ring. Figure 3 clearly shows that there are no bolt bores extending through ring 20 and that the bolt bores 38 are located in the bearing members 22. The Office Action suggests at page 2 that Chaix et al. describe a body 40 having a plurality of bolt bores extending therethrough. Applicant disagrees with this suggestion. Particularly, Col. 3, lines 10-15 describe that flange 18 is similar to flange 16, which Applicant submits is shown in Figure 3. The bolt bores 44 of flange 18 extend through bearing members 42, like in flange 16, and do not extend through the ring body 40. See also Figure 1 which clearly shows that the bolt bores 44 extend through bearing member 42 and not through the ring body 40.

Further, the apparatus described by Chaix et al. has a frustum-shaped shoulder on the bearing members. However, Chaix et al. do not describe nor suggest that this frustum-shaped

shoulder extends from a surface of the ring. Accordingly, Applicant submits that Claim 7 is patentable over Chaix et al.

Claims 8-11 depend from independent Claim 7. When the recitations of dependent Claims 8-11 are considered in combination with the recitations of Claim 7, Applicant respectfully submits tha Claims 8-11 likewise are patentable over Chaix et al.

For the reasons set forth above, Applicant respectfully requests that the Section 102(b) rejection of Claims 7-11 be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, all the claims now active in this application are believed to be in condition for allowance. Favorable action is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,



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